**Some advice to Parents for lockdown Wellbeing**

In September when we returned to school, it soon became apparent that students and parents had struggled during lockdown, leaving them with issues which needed to be resolved with support.

This advice has been written with these experiences in mind.

The main advice is please contact us if you need to.

**Providing the right learning environment**

All students will be expected to follow their timetable on google classroom. They need computer access, wi-fi, camera and microphone (normally built-in). Some students managed with their phones last lockdown, however, we have improved our online teaching and expectation this time to ensure high quality learning. It is likely that a phone will not be sufficient by itself. If you need to borrow a chromebook/laptop from school PLEASE get in contact.

Students need to be up in the morning and ready to learn. KS3 students will be expected to attend registration at 8.40am every morning. If they are absent parents will be called.

Students need to have a quiet space to work. Sometimes in large families this can be difficult or impossible. If this is the case, school is open and this student can come into school to work. (Please inform us beforehand).

If students miss work, parents will be informed.

If you, as a parent, feel that your daughter/son is being set too much work, too little work or is feeling overwhelmed with the work set, **please let us know**.

**Monitoring your child’s use of the internet**

This is particularly important for KS3 students. Last lockdown many students were on their phone or computer a great deal of the time, however, many spent lots of time on social media such as whatsapp, Instagram and Snapchat. Whilst keeping in contact with friends is very important for young people’s wellbeing, we would strongly recommend that parents monitor/check what is happening and how much time students are scrolling.

Sadly, without any monitoring students of this age struggle to regulate themselves and often then get overloaded with opinions and emotional content or become involved in inappropriate comments and postings.

This can then lead to them being in trouble or affect their outlook and wellbeing. In some cases, it is a large contributor to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

**Socialising**

Everybody understands how important it is to follow the lockdown rules to save lives and protect the NHS.

However, young people are still developing socially and emotionally and need the stimulus of contact to help them feel connected and ‘grounded’. This contact will mainly be with the family they live with, so please do not underestimate how much your child needs to talk with you and join in family activities. So many parents think that their teenager needs ‘space’ which is true but they also need to feel connected, listened to and part of a social group.

Encouraging your teenager to watch TV with you as a family, do quizzes or games, eat dinner together and talk, go for walks together, cook together etc is invaluable in their healthy development and wellbeing.

In normal times these activities are useful but in lockdown they are **essential** for your child’s wellbeing.

Keeping in touch with their friends is also very important. Encouraging them to zoom/video call or do online quizzes or anything interactive is fun and stimulating. Texting and social media play their part too, but students can be doing this and still feel disconnected and isolated from their friends.

**Physical routines**

Keeping in touch with normal routines helps us all to cope with such unusual circumstances.

You should encourage your child to maintain a regular bedtime and getting up time. This is a particular problem for older teenagers as parents give them more space to make these decisions for themselves. If they are not keeping sensible sleeping patterns- parents need to intervene.

Eating breakfast, lunch and dinner at regular times also helps to keep routines. You may have seen on the news how many students have developed eating disorders in the last lockdown. I would say that our experience at St. Michael’s echoes this. Keeping an eye on your child’s eating routines and encouraging regular and healthy eating is something you may find you are doing more during lockdown.

Exercise –walking or running is an amazing way to feel better physically and mentally. There are lots of apps for your phone with fitness, yoga and activity tracking which are fun. The PE department will also be running lessons and activities from google classroom.

There is no downside to exercise! Please encourage your child to get fresh air and exercise daily.

**Emotional Health**

This is a scary time for us all. As adults our children look to us as role models to form their attitudes.

We need to remain positive and to understand what we can control and what we can’t. Our energies need to go into improving what is in our control and not into worrying about what is not in our control.

**Above all else, children need to feel safe and loved. We need to give them lots of reassurance that their family is there for them**.

Try not to allow your child to watch endless news coverage of the pandemic; being informed is a good thing but being overloaded can be negative.

**Wellbeing**

We can ALL improve our wellbeing. But it takes conscious effort and decisions. Lockdown is an opportunity to actively reflect on our routines and decisions that we take. It helps us to control the aspects we can.

Creativity, such as painting, drawing, reading, watching films, making music are all things that we think we would do more of if we had more time. Well now is your chance! But you have to decide to do it.

**What if you are worried about your child’s wellbeing or mental health?**

If you are following all of the above advice but are concerned for your child then please get in touch with the school. There is support we can offer.

* We can arrange for the student to attend school
* We can arrange regular support phone calls with one our Student Support Assistants
* We can arrange phone or zoom counselling sessions with our School Counsellors
* We can give advice on external services such as CAMHS

**What if I am worried about a crisis with our family?**

Sadly, during the last lockdown, there were more cases of domestic violence, alcohol or substance abuse, divorce, bereavement and other family crises.

If your family would like some support please contact Mrs Sheehy who can discuss the external agencies who can support your family.

**Useful links**

Short video on wellbeing in lockdown

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/newsbeat-52411394>

Brilliant short videos for parents about supporting good mental health in children

<https://www.annafreud.org/parents-and-carers/child-in-mind/>

Self-care for parents and carers

<https://www.annafreud.org/parents-and-carers/self-care-for-parents-and-carers/>

NHS tips for wellbeing in lockdown

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

Mind information and tips

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Intellectual stimulation!!

Try a Youtube channel….Big Think, David Bennett Piano, Mike Boyd, Easy Languages, Lindsay Ellis, Everythink, Simone Glertz, Google Zeitgeist, Great Big Story

**Contacts**

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